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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 101367

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SUBJECT: (U) ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHANNON,S SEPARATE
MEETINGS WITH ITALIAN SECRETARY OF STATE ENZO SCOTTI,
GUATEMALAN FOREIGN MINISTER HAROLDO RODAS, AND PARAGUAYAN
FOREIGN MINISTER HECTOR LACOGNATA ON SEPTEMBER 23, 2009.

Classified By: Assistant Secretary Thomas A. Shannon. Reason: 1.4 (d)

11. (U) September 23, 2009; various times; New York, USA.

12. (C) SUMMARY. In separate meetings with Italian Secretary of State Ezno Scotti, Guatemalan Foreign Minister Haroldo Rodas, and Paraguayan FM Hector Lacognata, Assistant Secretary Shannon described the current state of affairs in Honduras following President Zelaya's surprise return to the capital, Tegucigalpa. A/S Shannon noted Zelaya's return may offer opportunities to resolve the crisis and promoted an OAS foreign ministers delegation as a possible means to end any street violence and bring the Zelaya and Micheletti to the bargaining table. Now that Zelaya has returned to Honduras, A/S Shannon stated that Zelaya should follow through on his commitment to Secretary Clinton that he will sign the Accord in Tegucigalpa. He also expressed hope that we will soon be able to move beyond the Honduras crisis and on to broader and more positive issues.

13. (C) Scotti asked about the military's role in the coup, inquired about opportunities for the Catholic Church to be constructive, and admitted Europeans were unsure how to keep pressure on Micheletti while allowing room for internationally recognized presidential elections come November. Rodas expressed grave concern for the regional instability that could result from the crisis, noted support for an OAS mission, and asked whether a high-level American could participate. He also undertook to reach out to the Guatemalan military and urge engagement with Honduran military leaders to encourage restraint. Lacognata raised separate issues with A/S Shannon, including the U.S.-Colombia Defense Cooperation Agreement and Paraguay's decision to terminate the Nuevo Horizonte joint cooperation program with the U.S. Department of Defense. END SUMMARY.

Honduras - Next Steps: OAS Mission; Elections?

14. (C) A/S Shannon said U.S. Ambassador to Honduras Hugo Llorens warned military leaders and the de facto defense and security ministers against storming the Brazilian embassy, where Zelaya had sought refuge. A/S Shannon noted the de factos received the message and understood grave consequences could follow; the de factos refrained from moving against the Brazilian mission.

15. (C) A/S Shannon promoted an OAS foreign ministers delegation as one solution to the crisis. The mission's goal would be twofold: to (1) prevent violence in the streets from escalating and (2) encourage the two parties to reach a negotiated settlement. A/S Shannon said the OAS mission also

should address the de factos' main concern - paving the way to November elections. He noted recent events had made it harder for the de facto government to assert that elections would take place under normal conditions. The de facto government has touted the elections as a way to resolve the crisis, but election campaigns cannot take place when curfews shutter people in their homes and tear gas wafts through the air.

Scotti

¶16. (C) Scotti wondered whether the Catholic Church could play a constructive role. A/S Shannon explained the Catholic Church could be helpful provided its role is not one-sided. Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez committed his support early on for the de factos, but has since backed away from this stance. A/S Shannon reported PDAS Craig Kelly met September 22 with the Papal Nuncio regarding the crisis. The Vatican has stated publically it does not support the coup. Scotti said Europe was unsure of how to pressure the de factos to accept the San Jose Accord while at the same time allowing room for the possibility of elections in November.

Rodas

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¶17. (SBU) Rodas expressed grave concern regarding the current state of affairs and for the instability it could bring to the entire region, but said he was hopeful that Zelaya's return could be an opportunity to resolve the crisis. He explained that he had recently met with leaders of the Honduran Chamber of Industry and reported that they see the November elections as the only possible solution. Where the industry leaders differ is the means by which we reach the elections, with some expressing support for the San Jose Accord and others standing firm in their opposition to Zelaya's reinstatement.

¶18. (C) Rodas affirmed strong Guatemalan support for an OAS foreign ministers mission to Honduras and suggested a broad delegation that would include countries such as Brazil, Guatemala, and the United States. He also suggested Spanish participation. A/S Shannon stated that we would consider U.S. participation and noted that an OAS mission could serve as the basis for an eventual OAS electoral observation mission.

¶19. (C) Stressing that powerful forces are at work in Honduras and that similar issues confront other Central American countries, Rodas asserted that Nicaragua could soon experience a comparable crisis. A/S Shannon noted concern about possible Honduran military actions and asked if the Guatemalan military could reach out to their counterparts to encourage restraint. Rodas promised to discuss this with Guatemalan military leadership. He concluded by stating that we can count on Guatemalan cooperation in finding a solution to the Honduran dilemma.

Lagocnata

¶10. (SBU) A/S Shannon reiterated U.S. support for President Lugo's administration, noting the positive interactions between the United States and Paraguay. A/S Shannon applauded Paraguay's important stabilizing role in the region and expressed gratitude for Paraguay's level-headed comments on both the U.S.-Colombia Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) and the Honduras crisis. A/S Shannon noted the United States benefited from hearing Paraguay's perspectives on these issues.

¶11. (C) FM Lacognata explained the reasons behind

terminating the Nuevo Horizonte joint military operation with the U.S. Department of Defense, but noted there were at least five other cooperative activities taking place. He highlighted Paraguay's unique historical place in the region, which allows the country to serve as a bridge between conflicting regional players, such as Colombia and Venezuela. Lacognata sees a larger role for Paraguay to play given the increasing polarization of Latin American governments. He said President Lugo would address this during his speech before the UN General Assembly.

¶12. (C) Regarding the DCA, Lacognata reiterated Colombia's right as a sovereign nation to enact bilateral agreements, but highlighted the need for complete transparency given the sensitivity to U.S. military activity in the region. He said Paraguay had no desire to put Colombia on the spot, but suggested the text of the DCA be released once completed and signed. He noted there was the much larger issue of arms purchases and other security agreements - mentioning Venezuela's accords with Russia and Iran - that required scrutiny.
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